

Ohio Part C State Systemic Improvement Plan

Phase III, Year 5

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Component #1 – State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR)

Ohio’s SIMR, to ***substantially increase the rate of growth in the percent of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who demonstrate improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills***, has remained the same since the beginning of this SSIP cycle. Ohio will complete data and infrastructure analyses over the next year and potentially choose a new SIMR for the next SSIP cycle.

1(a) Progress toward the SIMR

The table below includes the targets and results for Ohio’s SIMR, which correspond to the state’s targets and results for APR Indicator 3B, Summary Statement 1.

FFY	2013 (Baseline)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Target	58.00%	60.00%	61.00%	62.00%	63.00%	64.00%	62.90%
Actual	59.58%	62.16%	62.69%	62.08%	60.73%	61.63%	59.05%

The percentage for this indicator increased from FFY13 to FFY14, remained steady through FFY16, then gradually declined each year through FFY19. While this reporting year’s 59.05% of children who had a substantially increased rate of growth in acquiring and using knowledge and skills is the lowest percentage during this APR and SSIP cycle, Ohio is confident that the decline is due to increased data quality.

1(b) Data Quality Concerns

Ohio integrated the child outcomes summary (COS) into the child and family assessment process in 2015, and transitioned from collecting COS ratings to COS statements at that time. DODD recognized the data quality challenges and concerns as this significant process transition occurred. While the implications regarding data quality became less significant over time, FFY18 was the first reporting year where all included COS data were collected using the new process.

In addition to the implementation of the new COS process, DODD provided a significant amount of technical assistance (TA), created numerous resources, and made available a considerable amount of data related to the COS process over the last several years. This reporting year, the EI TA consultants placed a particularly substantial emphasis on the COS process in the local EI programs’ TA and training plans. Additionally, Ohio implemented a new IFSP form in July 2019 that more prominently emphasized the assessment process, including completing the COS. The COS descriptor statements were placed directly on the IFSP form, and DODD required more active involvement of evaluation and assessment teams in documenting the evaluation and assessment results—including the COS statements—on the IFSP form. With this increased focus on the COS, Ohio believes the percentage for Ohio’s SIMR, along with the percentages for other COS indicators, more accurately reflect child outcomes. Because Ohio allowed teams to transition to the new IFSP form at the annual IFSP for children with existing IFSPs, and because the state expects local programs to continue to make improvements in their COS process generally, Ohio acknowledges that these percentages could continue to decline for a few years.

DODD also completed analyses that compared COS data for children exiting prior to the COVID pandemic to those exiting during the pandemic. The FFY19 percentages were similar for these time periods, so COVID did not appear to impact Ohio’s SIMR or other COS data this reporting year.

Component #2 – Implementation, Analysis, and Evaluation

2(a) Theory of Action

Ohio has focused on the following three improvement strategy areas through its SSIP work thus far:

- **(I)** Increase the quality of child and family assessments to develop meaningful initial and exit COS statements
- **(II)** Improve the quality of IFSP outcomes to address family priorities related to the child’s acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
- **(III)** Increase access to and delivery of needed evidence-based services

Ohio’s Theory of Action illustrates how, in each of the three improvement strategy areas, further identification of issues and development of additional resources at the state level results in increased knowledge and improved practice among local programs and providers. These improvements within the local programs lead to more engaged and confident families. Together, these changes result in improvement in Ohio’s SIMR area. Over the past several years, Ohio’s Part C program worked through the state-level activities in the Theory of Action, then began to focus on ensuring the intended results were achieved among local programs and families. In doing so, Ohio achieved its short-term and intermediate outcomes and made progress toward achieving its long-term outcome, which is Ohio’s SIMR. See the figure below for further details.

Strands of Action	If Ohio’s Part C program ...	Then local programs and providers...	Then families...	Then ...
Quality of Child and Family Assessments	Identifies strengths and weaknesses within the child and family assessment process, including the extent to which assessment information informs child outcome statements about the child’s acquisition and use of knowledge and skills and develops or updates professional development materials to address identified areas of difficulty...	...Will conduct thorough, functional child and family assessments that identify family priorities related to acquisition and use of knowledge and skills; Will accurately and thoroughly record Child Outcomes Summary information...	...Will be involved as part of the team during the child and family assessment and have a thorough understanding of their child’s strengths, needs, and overall functioning in regard to acquiring and using knowledge and skills...	
Quality of IFSP Outcomes	Analyzes the extent to which IFSP outcomes are functional, family-directed, based on child and family assessments, and address family-identified needs related to acquisition and use of knowledge and skills and develops resources and trainings to emphasize aspects of quality outcomes and address areas of weakness...	...Will develop activity and routine-based IFSP outcomes which address family priorities identified in the child and family assessment process that impact acquisition and use of knowledge and skills...	...Will be fully engaged in development of IFSP outcomes to address the priorities they identify regarding acquisition and use of knowledge and skills...	...The percent of children who demonstrate improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills among children receiving Part C services will increase.
Access to and Delivery of Needed Services	Identifies gaps in needed services, maximizes resources available to fund these services, and develops resources and trainings for delivering quality, evidence-based interventions to address outcomes related to acquisition and use of knowledge and skills...	...Will have access to all needed services and ensure delivery of quality services that address the outcomes related to acquisition and use of knowledge and skills identified by the entire IFSP team, including the family...	...Will have improved confidence and competence and an increased ability to address acquisition and use of knowledge and skills to help the child develop and learn...	
	Short-Term	Intermediate	Long-Term	

2(b) Infrastructure Improvement Strategies

Continuing Improvement Strategies

Over the past several reporting years, Ohio completed steps and activities needed to achieve many of the state's short-term and intermediate outcomes and made significant progress toward achieving others. The steps and activities Ohio continued to implement in all three of its improvement strategy areas this reporting year focused on identifying additional technical assistance needs and updating trainings and resources, as needed, to meet these needs.

Improvement Strategy I: Increase the quality of child and family assessments to develop meaningful initial and exit COS statements

As mentioned in section 1(a), Ohio's new IFSP form implemented in July 2019 more prominently emphasizes the assessment and COS process and the EI TA consultants have prioritized the COS process in local programs' TA and training plans this reporting year. DODD continues to offer trainings regarding the ECO-MAP, Routines Based Interview (RBI), motivational interviewing, and the Newborn Behavioral Observations (NBO) system to help improve information gathered via the family-directed assessment (FDA) process and continues to promote the use of the DaSy COS modules and state-developed resources such as the COS toolkit. DODD also created a module exclusively covering the COS as part of its Principles of Service Coordination (POSC) course. Additionally, the state is developing a series of four modules on authentic assessment which are scheduled to launch in the first half of 2021 and is splitting its Infant-Toddler Development module (originally developed by Family, Infant and Preschool Program Center for the Advanced Study of Excellence (FIPP CASE)) into two parts, one of which will explicitly cover the COS.

Improvement Strategy II: Improve the quality of IFSP outcomes to address family priorities related to child's acquisition and use of knowledge and skills

DODD again reviewed and rated a representative sample of IFSP outcomes this reporting year, utilizing the ECTA six-step criteria to complete the ratings. The state identifies broad training needs related to outcome development through the outcome rating process, and the EI TA consultants identify training needs more narrowly at the local level as they interact with local programs and review records through typical TA processes. Trainings and resources are created and updated and local programs' TA and training plans are tailored as needed to address needs related to outcome development.

Improvement Strategy III: Increase access to and delivery of needed evidence-based services

Due to the COVID pandemic, DODD focused on assisting its EI field in transitioning from providing EI services primarily in families' homes to providing services virtually. EI TA consultants were in contact with each local program on at least a biweekly basis during the first months of the pandemic to ensure local programs had the support they needed to continue providing evidence-based services. The state also surveyed local programs at the beginning of the pandemic, and again several months later to obtain more information about service delivery and to determine where additional support was needed. DODD learned, through responses to these surveys as well as the state's annual Family Questionnaire, that evidence-based services continued to be delivered. Further, in some cases, the virtual platform actually helped facilitate the use of evidence-based practices including greater participation of team members in the evaluation and assessment process, increased use of a coaching interaction style with families, more opportunities for the team to observe family routines, and an increased ability for family members to participate as equals in team meetings.

Evaluating Outcomes

Ohio established an action plan with its Phase II submission that outlined all of the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes the state intended to achieve, and included specific evaluation questions the state would use to gather data regarding the progress made toward achieving these outcomes. DODD has reported data related to the evaluation questions listed below, which are all associated with the state's intermediate outcomes, in each year of Phase III reporting. A description of how these data were collected and analyzed, the established benchmarks, and previous years' data can also be found in these reports. For the Phase III, Year 5 reporting period, results for each of Ohio's evaluation questions are described subsequently.

(I)(B)(Q1) Are child and family assessments more thorough?

Forty-three local programs (49%) scored at least 80% on the Functional Assessment review (14 or higher out of a possible 17 points). This is the highest percentage of counties that have met this benchmark of all reporting years.

(I)(B)(Q2) Are children's levels of functioning better identified by the child and family assessment process?

The E&A Process Review consistently included information about child/family engagement in 71 local programs (81%), which is the highest percentage of counties that have met this benchmark of all reporting years; how independently the child participates in family preferred activities and routines in 51 local programs (58%); and the strength of social relationships in 56 local programs (64%).

(I)(B)(Q3) Do families have a better understanding of their child's strengths, needs, and functioning regarding acquisition and use of knowledge and skills?

At least 95% of respondents answered that they agree or strongly agree that EI has helped them understand their child's strengths and needs in learning new things and gaining new skills in 65 local programs (76% of respondent programs). This is the highest percentage of counties that have met this benchmark of all reporting years.

(II)(C)(Q1) Are IFSP outcomes of higher quality?

At least 80% of rated outcomes met all of the six-step criteria in seven local programs (8%). This is the highest percentage of counties that have met this benchmark of all reporting years. Additionally, a higher percentage of rated outcomes met all six criteria than any of the previous reporting years.

(II)(C)(Q2) Do IFSP outcomes better meet the family-identified priorities that address acquisition and use of knowledge and skills?

As DODD prepared to potentially select a new SIMR and focused on providing guidance to ensure local programs could continue implementing EI through the COVID pandemic, including conducting functional assessments and the COS process, the state did not collect data for this outcome for this submission.

(III)(C)(Q1) Have gaps in services that impact acquisition and use of knowledge and skills been reduced? and (III)(C) (Q2) Do families have increased access to needed evidence-based EI services?

The majority of local programs reported having access to all of the "core" services each year, and by 2020, 100% of the counties reported having access to all of these services. As such, and because the state was focused on ensuring families continued to have access to these services through the COVID pandemic, Ohio did not collect data for this outcome for this submission.

(III)(D)(Q2) Do families have an increased ability to support their child's development regarding acquisition and use of knowledge and skills?

At least 95% of respondents answered that they agree or strongly agree that EI has made them better able to support their child in learning new things and gaining new skills in 74 local programs (86% of respondent programs). This is the highest percentage of counties that have met this benchmark of all reporting years.

Next Steps

Ohio's SSIP action plan (See Appendix B of Ohio's Phase II submission) included activities to be completed through June 2019. Ohio successfully implemented these activities in all three improvement strategy areas. DODD is actively engaging in conversations internally and with the state's EI stakeholders to begin in depth data and infrastructure analyses similar to those completed during Phase I of this SSIP cycle to reevaluate the short- and long-term needs and priorities of the state's EI system. Ohio's EI stakeholders have expressed interest in improving children's social and emotional development, and DODD had a formal discussion about changing the state's SIMR at the February 2021 EI Advisory Council and Stakeholder Group (the state's inter-agency coordinating council (ICC) and larger EI stakeholder group) meeting. As DODD works with stakeholders to create a new plan, we will consider how the SSIP fits into and ensure it aligns with the plans, projects, and initiatives of Ohio's broader EI system, statewide early childhood priorities, and the governor's priorities.

2(c) Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)

Implementation of EBPs

Despite focusing heavily on supporting the EI field through the pandemic, Ohio continued implementing the seven EI Key Principles and DEC RPs this reporting year, utilizing its SSIP work to advance its EI system as a whole and to refine the specific practices within its SSIP work that would have the most substantial effect on improving its SIMR area. The state continued implementing EBPs related to each improvement strategy, and will continue to do so until practices are being implemented to fidelity statewide. DEC RPs directly related to Ohio's SSIP work include the following:

- **RP A6** - Use a variety of methods, including observation and interviews, to gather assessment information from multiple sources, including the child's family and other significant individuals in the child's life
- **RP A7** - Obtain information about the child's skills in daily activities, routines, and environments such as home, center, and community
- **RP F3** – Practitioners are responsive to the family's concerns, priorities, and changing life circumstances
- **RP F4** - Practitioners and the family work together to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized plans, and implement practices that address the family's priorities and concerns and the child's strengths and needs
- **RP F7** - Practitioners work with the family to identify, access, and use formal and informal resources and supports to achieve family-identified outcomes or goals
- **RP TC2** - Practitioners and families work together as a team to systematically and regularly exchange expertise, knowledge, and information to build team capacity and jointly solve problems, plan, and implement interventions
- **RP TC5** - Practitioners and families may collaborate with each other to identify one practitioner from the team who serves as the primary liaison between the family and other team members based on child and family priorities and needs

Ohio continued to make progress in the RPs outlined above, as indicated by intermediate outcomes data and comments received directly from families on the state's annual Family Questionnaire. As mentioned previously, completing EI activities via technology even expanded the implementation of EBPs in some cases, as team members and families had more opportunities to participate in the evaluation and assessment process and team meetings. Through TA, professional development (including practice-based opportunities), and coaching, DODD will continue to ensure local programs have the support needed to implement EBPs with fidelity going forward.

Evaluating and Monitoring Fidelity of EBP Implementation

Both data related to intermediate outcomes and responses directly from families indicate that Ohio's implementation of EBPs is having the desired effects. Specifically, the functional assessment data show that a greater number of local programs are completing functional assessments, including reflecting an authentic picture of the child and family and gathering information about the child's participation in preferred family activities; the interests, concerns, resources, and routines of the family; and the strength of social relationships (RPs A6 and A7) than at the time baseline data were collected. The IFSP outcomes data provide evidence that practitioners and families are collaborating to address priorities and concerns, identify resources, exchange knowledge, and create outcomes that address the needs of the child and family (RPs F3, F4, F7, and TC2).

The most powerful evidence that EBPs are being implemented with fidelity, though, is provided directly by families. In responses to Ohio's 2020 Family Questionnaire, many families continued to reference the benefits of coaching and receiving services in natural environments. More specific to the SSIP, families also continued to indicate that providers are responsive to their priorities and concerns (RP F3); that practitioners work with them to create outcomes for their child (RP F4) and to identify and access resources (RP F7); that practitioners and families work together to exchange expertise and knowledge, solve problems, plan, and implement interventions (TC2); and that a practitioner is selected to be the primary liaison between the family and the team based on family priorities and needs (TC5). Further, this direct feedback from families indicates that the implementation of EBPs is having the desired effect of increasing families' confidence and competence in supporting their child's development.

Supporting the Knowledge and Use of EBPs

While moving forward with the implementation of the state's SSIP and, more broadly, its EI system, DODD prioritized providing the needed support to local programs and providers to ensure continuity of care for families through the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of EI activities in Ohio took place in families' homes. Thus, the transition to completing these activities almost exclusively virtually required a momentous shift in Ohio's EI system in a very short amount of time. The state's TA, professional development, guidance, data, and monitoring efforts were coordinated to support its local programs through this shift and as the pandemic continued.

DODD created and distributed guidance covering how to complete evaluations and assessments, provide services, and support families during the pandemic. The state also distributed and posted an extensive list of COVID-related resources available from other state entities and agencies and national TA centers. Additionally, DODD held webinars on pandemic-specific topics; analyzed and reported on referral trends weekly; surveyed local Contract Managers early in the pandemic and again several months later regarding the implementation of EI requirements during the pandemic; and checked in frequently regarding TA needs related to the pandemic. While providing this intensive support, the

state also continued to create and offer professional development opportunities and resources that embedded information to support the knowledge and use of evidence-based practices more broadly.

Component #3 – Stakeholder Engagement

3(a) Engagement in Improvement Efforts

Stakeholder Involvement in SSIP Implementation

Ohio communicates with and seeks feedback from its EI stakeholders broadly through a newsletter compiled by the Part C Coordinator and distributed to more than 4,000 recipients every other week. These newsletters include information about guidance, resources and materials, trainings, monitoring processes, the data system, and other important topics within the EI system in Ohio, including those specific to the SSIP. DODD has more extensive discussions with its EI Advisory Council and Stakeholder Group regarding all the same topics, including the implementation of activities and status of outcomes that are part of its SSIP. Finally, DODD collaborates with smaller groups of stakeholders on more targeted projects through work groups, pilots, and surveys.

This reporting year, much of the engagement DODD had with stakeholders centered around completing EI requirements virtually during the pandemic. The state sought feedback from local program Contract Managers in creating guidance documents regarding determining eligibility, completing functional assessments, and delivering evidence-based EI services virtually. DODD also surveyed local programs regarding their experiences implementing these requirements at the beginning of the pandemic and again several months later. In addition to COVID-specific engagement, DODD continued to hold quarterly meetings with its EI Advisory Council and broader stakeholder group, although these meetings were transitioned to a virtual format. The state had extensive conversations with EI stakeholders regarding future targets for performance indicators, including the COS indicators, which could have future implications on the state's SIMR selection and targets. The state also engaged with stakeholders via a pilot for the Principles of Service Coordination course, a work group that assisted in re-writing the state's Developmental Specialist Certification rule; and surveys regarding family-centered practices, local program involvement in the family questionnaire process, reflective supervision, transition, and the NBO training. Finally, stakeholders continued to participate in a variety of trainings and webinars and receive TA related to completing functional assessments and the COS, writing functional IFSP outcomes, and delivering evidence-based EI services.

Stakeholder Involvement in the SSIP Evaluation

Ohio's EI stakeholders were meaningfully involved in the creation of targets for Ohio's intermediate SSIP outcomes and the review of data and targets each reporting year. Ohio's EI stakeholders also remained involved in the collection of the needed ongoing evaluation data associated with the state's intermediate outcomes. EI TA Consultants drew on their conversations and interactions with local program staff and information obtained through record reviews to determine how well functional assessments were being conducted across the state. Nearly 1,300 families in EI responded to Ohio's 2019 Family Questionnaire, including whether EI helped them better understand their child's strengths, needs, and functioning; whether EI helped them better support their child's development; and how they could be better engaged in the program. The results of these items, and all Family Questionnaire responses, were distributed to each local program's EI Contract Manager and FCFC Coordinator. Additionally, DODD staff again completed ratings of a representative sample of IFSP outcomes, all of

which had been documented by local program staff. As DODD moves into the next phase of the SSIP, stakeholders will continue to be meaningfully involved in all aspects of the plan.

3(b) Expressed Concerns

Stakeholders did not express any concerns regarding Ohio's SSIP during this reporting year.

3(c) Required Actions

There were no required actions related to the SSIP in OSEP's response to Ohio's FFY18 SPP/APR submission.